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UNCLAS LILONGWE 001022

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR G/TIP (YOUSEY)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/28/2014

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [KCRM](#) [KWMN](#) [MI](#) [HIV AIDS](#)

SUBJECT: TIP: NEW MALAWI GOVERNMENT WORKING TO ADDRESS ROOT CAUSES

REF: A. LILONGWE 710

[1](#)B. STATE 184081

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (U) Charge and poloff paid an introductory call on Malawi's Minister of Gender, Child Welfare, and Community Services, Joyce Banda on October 28. Charge used the opportunity to follow up on the previously raised issue of trafficking in persons (TIP) (reftel A), a topic Banda was eager to discuss. While she expressed some frustration with the USG's TIP policy, Banda said that the new Malawi government recognizes the seriousness of the problem and is taking steps to address the root causes of human trafficking. END SUMMARY.

CONTEXT, PERSPECTIVE, AND REALITY

[1](#)2. (U) The GOM's approach to TIP is that it is a symptom of a larger problem, and that the underlying causes must be addressed in order to reduce all forms of TIP. Banda pointed out that a growing number of households in Malawi are headed by orphans whose parents have died of HIV/AIDS. A struggling economy, oppressive poverty, soaring HIV/AIDS infection rates, and low access to education also limit options for prosperity. Prostitution, she said, is not an organized activity and is usually the last resort a young woman may have in order to survive. Banda said that while disagreeing with the data in the TIP report, the GOM could not ignore the existence of TIP - even if it hadn't understood the definition - and had to "look at the problem critically and move to work against it".

THE GOM'S SHORT TERM ACCOMPLISHMENTS...

[1](#)3. (SBU) Banda noted that following our previous conversation about trafficking, she passed a copy of the 2003 TIP Report and her concerns about it (and the overall issue) along to President Mutharika. According to Banda, the President then called an inter-ministerial meeting to discuss both the report and the problem. Since that time, she said, the GOM has developed a National Gender Program to address cross-cutting gender issues in Malawi. In May, the new administration conducted a rapid assessment of the situation of orphans in the country and determined that they are at particular risk for various forms of exploitation. To counter this, the GOM has developed and will soon begin implementing a national action plan for orphans and vulnerable children, which will aim to reduce the root causes of victimization. The GOM, with assistance from NGOs and other donors, has paid the school fees for more than 600 students this year, and the Minister hopes to reach a target of assisting 10,000 orphans to return to school in the next year.

...AND LONG TERM STRATEGY

[1](#)4. (U) The national action plan for orphans and vulnerable children will be launched on November 8 with initial training for more than 200 new child protection officers in every district of the country. The plan, which is slated to last for five years, includes six key strategies: Capacity building, beginning with the initial training and placement of the officers in each constituency of the country; household and community education; protection of children in danger; assistance to victims; skills building, including vocational training and life skills; and strengthened legal protections for children and orphans.

COMMENT

[1](#)5. (SBU) Banda is new to government, having spent her entire career working with NGOs as an advocate for the rights of women and children. She is an energetic public servant who has clearly placed TIP high on her agenda. She noted that the new government of President Mutharika is taking the issue seriously and that the President has taken a personal interest. Additional work is underway in other sectors of government to combat the problem. Charge and poloff have, in

numerous meetings with GOM officials, raised the points in
reftel B. Further GOM action will be reported septel.
GILMOUR